

From *A Chestbook Festschrift*, by Ray Fahrner and Bill Yarrow

Introductions [DRAFT]

Juan am I, I am Juan - Juan Amor Grise. I am directly offspring from the great, beloved, hard-drinking Moustache Grise, warm son of the sensual, sexy soprano, Chatte Grise, identical twin of the much feted Amahl Grise, descended through the gray past of Grises both ordinary and proper, heroic and dastardly, bekown and bastardly, renowned and reverberant.

Moustache Grise, my great, beloved, hard-drinking father, was the fourth spouse of Chatte Grise that we know of. The great, beloved, hard-drinking Moustache Grise supported *Le Lapin Souûl* [*The Drunken Rabbit*], the ancestral organic rabbit farm and brewpub just across the border from Andorra, and business was hopping. I, Juan Amor Grise, thought that I would be the heir apparent, or something like that – some say there were many heirs apparent.

The great, beloved, hard-drinking Moustache Grise is reputed to have been a free-range philanderer in his salad days. But apparently he *was* my père biologique. We both have the same large but graceful feet, the same receding hairline, the same skills in the lost and ancient arts of woodworking, the same talent at rabbiting. But I flatter myself, for I, Juan Amor Grise, am but a mere mirror reflection of the great, beloved, hard-drinking Moustache Grise.

My brother sails incessantly, from coastal town to town, he has reported. Though he is alive, I mention him in passing - I cannot bear to utter his name. The business plan of the great, beloved, hard-drinking Moustache Grise was for this, my brother. But stewing about it, my brother eschewed the family business, (family planning being bad for business), he gave me the business, and left to become a dairy farmer of a uncaudified cattle. I'll spare you the details. He drove off into the dawn in his racecar – a Toyota.

What can be said of our mother, Chatte Grise, that shouldn't have already not been said before? Where is the line between free spirit and sails flapping too loose – she hailed from southern France - in the wind, telltales dangling? What can be told of the other men and, yes, the other women in her rich, grande boulevarded life? How could she stomach country life on the rabbit farm and brewpub, in spite of the 50's music and dances? And why did...

[Knock, knock.]

The doorbell was broken. It and the cat were on my list of things to get fixed, I thought, feeling cranky.

“Who's there? “

“Ezra. Open the door, or we'll break it down.”

“Ezra who?”

[Pound, pound, pound.]

“Open up. We have a warrant for you.”

The police, here at the farm!

After all these punishing years of working on the family farm and brewpub, tending rabbits, dishing out borscht and cultivating corn, I, Juan Amor Grise, was finally going to get served, ungestly. This was unwarranted.

“Open up. We have a warrant for your arrest in connection with the disappearance of The Bootlegger's Daughter.”

My mind stumbled when I heard her name. All I could think of was the *peau lisse* behind. I floundered. The Bootlegger's Daughter! TBD! Maybe, just maybe, she was still alive. If she was, I had to find her, find her before the police did.

[To be continued]